

When Helping Hands Heal: Occupational Therapy Brought Back One Woman's Freedom

Think about all of the basic tasks you do on a day-to-day basis without even thinking about them: brushing your hair, writing a grocery list, tying your shoes, doing the dishes or even eating a meal. Imagine if those once simple activities became laborious and almost impossible for you to complete. Frustration starts to consume you as you rely on the help of others to get through each day. This is where Gabriela Urrutia was just months ago.

Gabriela had ruptured tendons, a distal radius fracture and a compound fracture in her dominant right hand, as well as carpal tunnel problems. She was no longer able to finish any common daily tasks without the help of her brother. One of her favorite hobbies, painting, was no longer a part of her life.

It was clear that surgery was needed at this point. Gabriela had a tendon transfer from her index finger to her thumb, had two bones in her hand repaired and underwent an open carpal tunnel release surgery. These surgeries laid the ground work for Gabriela to begin her recovery.

Post-surgery, Occupational Therapist and Certified Hand Therapist Jiansan Ding at the Charles M. Magistro Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Center at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center (PVHMC) started working with Gabriela to bring back the flexibility and strength into her hands. The occupational therapy sessions with Ding and assistant Kevin Mei first targeted regaining flexibility and movement in her hands by incorporating cutting edge exercises such as the Mulligan Manuever or Mulligan's Mobilization with Movement Method, which combines passive range of motion exercises with active range of motion exercises to achieve mobilization. After weeks of working on her flexibility, they also incorporated strength exercises.



The process is not easy and takes patience and commitment from both the therapist and the patient. Occupational Therapists at PVHMC work with the American Society for Surgery of the Hand to find the latest discoveries in hand therapies, so patients are always receiving the most advanced care.

With only three months of therapy completed, Gabriela has already made significant improvements. She is able to feed herself, write, brush her teeth and even paint again. For Gabriela, her prayers for the healing of her right hand had been answered during her time at PVHMC.

“The people at PVHMC have not only helped me heal physically, but also emotionally,” she said. “When I arrive at therapy, I am greeted with a smile and a concerned therapist checking in on me to see how I am doing. At PVHMC you are not alone; you are brought into the family. The determination, dedication and compassion of the Occupational Therapy team gives you hope. I believe that this truly helped me regain the use of my right hand.”

If you or a loved one is suffering from hand or joint problems, do not wait any longer to get help. Start living the life you want and enjoying the little things in life, because the little things matter.

Call (909) 865-9810 for more information about Occupational Therapy services at PVHMC.